Domain Perspective

[redacted]

FBI Richmond
23 January 2023

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(U) Domain Perspective (DP) template approved for fiscal year 2023, as of 1 October 2022.

(U//FOUO) Interest of Racially or Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremists in Radical-Traditionalist Catholic Ideology Almost Certainly Presents New Mitigation Opportunities

(U) Executive Summary

(U//FOUO) FBI Richmond assesses the increasingly observed interest of racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists (RMVEs) in radical-traditionalist Catholic (RTC)[a] ideology almost certainly[b] presents opportunities for threat mitigation through the exploration of new avenues for tripwire and source development. FBI Richmond makes this assessment with high confidence[c] based on FBI investigations, local law enforcement agency reporting, and liaison reporting, with varying degrees of corroboration and access.

(U//FOUO) In making this assessment, FBI Richmond relied on the key assumption that RMVEs will continue to find RTC ideology attractive and will continue to attempt to connect with RTC adherents, both virtually via social media and in-person at places of worship. Indicators that would cause FBI Richmond to revise the judgments or confidence levels in its assessment include increases or decreases in RMVE subjects' attendance at RTC or traditionalist Catholic places of worship; increases or decreases in RMVE subjects' activity on social media platforms and forums maintained or frequented by RTCs; or the public distancing of prominent RTC or traditionalist Catholic personalities or institutions from RMVE ideologies. FBI Richmond assesses RMVE interest in RTCs is likely to increase over the next 12 to 24 months in the run-up

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[a] (U) Analyst Note: RTCs are typically characterized by the rejection of the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) as a valid church council; disdain for most of the popes elected since Vatican II, particularly Pope Francis and Pope John Paul II; and frequent adherence to anti-Semitic, anti-immigrant, anti-LGBTQ, and white supremacist ideology. Radical-traditionalist Catholics compose a small minority of overall Roman Catholic adherents and are separate and distinct from "traditionalist Catholics" who prefer the Traditional Latin Mass and pre-Vatican II teachings and traditions, but without the more extremist ideological beliefs and violent rhetoric. Vatican II took place from 1962-1965 and essentially shaped the modern Roman Rite Catholic Church. It was intended to help the church respond to global cultural changes in the aftermath of World War II and resulted in significant reforms to the liturgy, attitudes toward non-Christian religions, roles and responsibilities of the laity, views on religious freedom, etc.
[b] (U) See Appendix B: Expressions of Likelihood.
[c] (U) See Appendix C: Confidence in Assessments and Judgments Based on a Body of Information.

to the next general election cycle, complicating the overall RMVE threat picture while also creating new opportunities for mitigation efforts. During this same 12 to 24 month period, the overall RTC community is likely to remain relatively stable or show modest growth, providing RMVEs a persistent Catholic-oriented base with which to interact. FBI Richmond did not include an Analysis of Alternatives in this product due to the quality of the source information and the lack of significant uncertainties.

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(U//FOUO) Increasingly Observed Interest of RMVEs in RTC Ideology Almost Certainly Presents New Opportunities for Threat Mitigation

(U//FOUO) FBI Richmond assesses the increasingly observed interest of RMVEs in RTC ideology almost certainly presents new opportunities for threat mitigation through the exploration of new avenues for tripwire and source development. This assessment is based on reporting [redacted] and liaison and contact reporting demonstrating RMVE actors have sought out and attended traditionalist Catholic houses of worship, as well as used language indicative of adherence to RTC ideology in social media postings.

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[d] (U) Analyst Note: The Society of Saint Pius X (SSPX) is an international priestly society that promotes the traditional Catholic priesthood and the celebration of the traditional Latin Mass and sacraments. It is named after Pope Pius X whose anti-Modernist stance serves as the organization's inspiration. The SSPX is currently considered "canonically irregular" (i.e., not in full communion with the Vatican). The SSPX has spawned a number of offshoots. These include SSPX-Resistance, aka SSPX-Marian Corps (SSPX-MC), which rejected SSPX attempts to reconcile with the Vatican; the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Peter (FSSP), which holds to many of the SSPX beliefs and practices, but ultimately split from the SSPX to stay in full communion with the Vatican; and the Society of Saint Pius V (SSPV), which does not consider Vatican II valid and binding, questions the legitimacy of all of the popes since Vatican II, and has no canonical standing (i.e., is schismatic).

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(U) Perspective

(U) As of 2021, the Southern Poverty Law Center identified nine RTC hate groups operating in the United States (*see Appendix D for a complete list of these groups and their headquarters'*

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[e] (U) Novus Ordo, short for Novus Ordo Missae, refers to the new order of the Catholic Mass promulgated by Pope Paul VI in the aftermath of Vatican II. The Novus Ordo Mass is delivered in the vernacular (as opposed to Latin) and is the normal form of the Mass in the Roman Rite of the Catholic Church.

[f] (U) Legio Christi is not associated with the mainline Roman Catholic religious order known as the Legionaries of Christ, aka the Legion of Christ.

locations).[9] Open source reporting and FBI investigations have noted a growing overlap between the far-right white nationalist movement and RTCs. Illustrative of this has been the increasing collaboration of the far-right Catholic media outlet Church Militant (and its activist wing, the Resistance network) with the America First/"groyper"[g] movement.[10,11] The ongoing convergence of the far-right white nationalist movement and RTCs was further demonstrated through the increase in hostility toward abortion-rights advocates on social media sites in the run-up to and aftermath of the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision that overturned *Roe v. Wade*.[12] Much of the interaction between far-right white nationalists and RTCs takes place online, and adherents of RTCs and other far-right white nationalist groups frequently share language and symbolism, such as crusader references or anti-Semitic discourses.

(U//FOUO) This is the first FBI Richmond domain product to focus on the interest of RMVEs in the RTC movement. A search of FBI databases indicated this is also the first FBI finished intelligence product to specifically address this environmental variable.

(U) Outlook

(U//FOUO) FBI Richmond assesses RMVE interest in RTCs is likely to increase over the next 12 to 24 months in the run-up to the next general election cycle complicating the overall RMVE threat picture while also creating new opportunities for mitigation efforts. This assessment is made in light of the ongoing polarization characterizing the US political environment and the probability that policy issues of mutual interest to RMVEs and RTC adherents will remain in the public spotlight. Catalyzing events in which RMVEs and RTC adherents might have common cause include legislation or judicial decisions in areas such as abortion rights,[h] immigration, affirmative action, and LGBTQ protections. During this same 12 to 24 month period, the overall RTC community is likely to remain relatively stable or show modest growth based on potential disaffection with mainline Catholic churches on social issues in the aforementioned areas, providing RMVEs a persistent Catholic-oriented base with which to interact.

(U//FOUO) Ultimately, there may be limits to the level of engagement between RTCs and other far-right white nationalists. For example, many RTCs consider other forms of Christianity to be heretical and an over-emphasis on white US nationalism may be off-putting to RTCs of different ethnicities and countries of origin. Conversely, deep-seated anti-Catholicism remains a characteristic of many far-right white nationalists. Nonetheless, the current trend of RMVE interest in RTC ideology provides new opportunities to mitigate the RMVE threat through outreach to traditionalist Catholic parishes[i] and the development of sources with the placement

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[g] (U) The term "groyper" refers to followers of Nick Fuentes's alt-right "America First" movement, which is characterized by its white Christian nationalism platform.

[h] (U) Analyst Note: Currently, Virginia bans abortion after 26 weeks, 6 days, unless performed by a licensed physician in a licensed hospital with three physicians certifying that the continuation of the pregnancy will result in death of the pregnant person or impair their mental or physical health. According to open source reporting, in the aftermath of the Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, Virginia Governor Youngkin has called on state legislators to enact restrictions that would ban abortions in Virginia after 15 weeks.

[i] (U) According to official websites for the respective organizations, there are both SSPX and FSSP houses of worship in the FBI Richmond AOR. There are no formally recognized SSPX-MC or SSPV houses of worship in the FBI Richmond AOR.

and access to report on RMVEs seeking to use RTC social media sites or places of worship as facilitation platforms to promote violence.

(U) Warning and Caveats

(U) Potential criminality exhibited by certain members of a group referenced herein does not negate nor is it a comment on the constitutional rights of the group itself or its members to exercise their rights under the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The FBI does not investigate, collect, or maintain information on U.S. persons solely for the purpose of monitoring activities protected by the First Amendment.

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(U) Appendix D: Southern Poverty Law Center-Defined RTC Hate Groups in the United States

(U) Following are the nine RTC hate groups operating in the United States in 2021 as defined by the Southern Policy Law Center, followed by the location of their organizational headquarters.

- (U) Catholic Apologetics International (Greencastle, Pennsylvania)
- (U) Catholic Family News/Catholic Family Ministries, Inc. (Niagara Falls, New York)
- (U) Christ or Chaos (Corsicana, Texas)
- (U) Culture Wars/Fidelity Press (South Bend, Indiana)
- (U) The Fatima Crusader/International Fatima Rosary Crusade (Buffalo, New York)
- (U) In the Spirit of Chartres Committee (Glenelg, Maryland)
- (U) The Remnant/The Remnant Press (Forest Lake, Minnesota)
- (U) Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (Town of Richmond, New Hampshire)
- (U) Tradition in Action (Los Angeles, California)

Source: (U) Website | Southern Poverty Law Center | "Radical Traditional Catholicism" | https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/radical-traditional-catholicism | Accessed on 12 December 2022.

(U) Endnotes

[9] (U) Website | Southern Poverty Law Center | "Radical Traditional Catholicism" | https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/radical-traditional-catholicism | Accessed on 12 December 2022.
[10] (U) Website | Salon | "White Nationalists Get Religion: On the Far-Right Fringe, a Catholics and Rascists Forge a Movement" | 12 May 2022 | https://www.salon.com/2022/05/12/nationalists-get-religion-on-the-far-right-fringe-catholics-and-forge-a-movement/ | Accessed on 5 December 2022.
[11] (U) Website | Salon | "Traditional" Catholics and White Nationalist "Groypers" Forge a New Far-Right Youth Movement" | 13 May 2022 | https://www.salon.com/2022/05/13/trad-catholics-and-nationalist-groypers-forge-a-new-far-right-youth-movement/ | Accessed on 5 December 2022.
[12] (U) Website | The Atlantic | "How Extremist Gun Culture is Trying to Co-opt the Rosary" | 14 August 2022 | https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2022/08/radical-traditionalist-catholic-christian-rosary-weapon/671122/ | Accessed on 5 December 2022.